

MINUTES of the Agenda Conference of the Council of the Borough of North Plainfield held on Monday, **March 27, 2023** at 7:36 p.m. via Zoom.

PRESENT:

Council Members: Aimee Corzo, Council Vice President
Suzette Given
Steven McIntyre
Everett Merrill
Keiona R. Miller
Wendy Schaefer
Frank “Skip” Stabile, Council President

Also Present: Lawrence La Ronde, Mayor
David E. Hollod, Business Administrator
Brian Hak, Esq., Associate Borough Attorney
Michele Irby-Garry, CMR, Acting Borough Clerk

Council President Stabile read the following Notice of Compliance:

"This meeting is being held in compliance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq. Adequate notice of this meeting was provided by transmitting notice to the official newspapers of the Borough, The Courier News, WKMB Radio, WJLP-TV, the Alternative Press and also to the Star Ledger on December 12, 2022 and by posting a copy of this notice on the bulletin boards in the Municipal Building and the Memorial Library reserved for such purpose."

The Flag Salute was led by Mayor La Ronde followed by a moment of silence for the men and women serving in the Armed Forces.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Katherine Moore, 45 Willow Avenue, North Plainfield, voiced her concerns with the amount of speeding on Willow Avenue. The signs that indicate a vehicle’s rate of speed have not lessened the issue, she remarked.

Geri Modell, 296 Brook Avenue, North Plainfield, shared her concerns with the amount of speeding throughout the Borough. Encouraging more radar enforcement, the speaker also favored the installation of speed humps. She questioned the legality of aftermarket exhaust systems, stressing her frustrations with the noise pollution they generate.

Frank D’Amore, 40 Willow Avenue, North Plainfield, voiced his concerns with parents crossing their children on Greenbrook Road between Hawthorne Place and West End Avenue, fearing it inevitable that a child be struck. Motorists continue to use the shoulder as a lane at the Route 22 Eastbound and West End Avenue turn-off which is dangerous and illegal. He called for stronger enforcement of traffic violators throughout the Borough.

Daniel Hudock, 2 Orchard Avenue, North Plainfield, advised that the yield sign at the intersection of Orchard Avenue and Willow Avenue has not deterred motorists from speeding.

Mark Kruszczynski, 48 Willow Avenue, North Plainfield, stressed that speeding on Willow Avenue has progressively worsened over the years. Citing multiple accidents caused by speeding motorists in and near his home, he called for stronger traffic enforcement and the installation of speed humps. He thanked Sgt. Dennis Kardos for his assistance with a traffic study used to assist in the placement of illuminated cross walk signs by the high school.

Peter Beckman, 18 Rockview Terrace, North Plainfield, shared his concerns with the amount of speeding in the Borough, specifically in the area of Rockview Terrace. He advised against the use of speed humps, fearing a speeding vehicle may become airborne upon impact.

Richard Gaczynski, 275 North Drive, North Plainfield, voiced his concerns with the amount of standing traffic when vehicles wait to turn left at the Mountain Avenue and North Drive traffic light. He asked for an increase to the thirty-second intervals at the traffic light in the hopes it may alleviate the issue.

Ralph Iaione, 44 Grandview Avenue, North Plainfield, commented that International Sports Club patrons and over-crowding have drastically increased the amount of on-street parking in his neighborhood.

Francis Gallic, 61 Willow Avenue, North Plainfield, spoke about the increased speeding on Myrtle Avenue and Willow Avenue. Calling for more severe parking enforcement, he stressed that some vehicles have been parked next to stop signs.

Diane Melendez, 24 Howard Street, North Plainfield, suggested that Howard Street be made a one-way street due to the amount of illegal parking and speeding. The speaker advised that she felt compelled to move because of the many issues in her neighborhood.

Thomas Jones, 673 Greenbrook Road, North Plainfield, called for a greater police presence throughout the Borough, possibly even utilizing the Somerset County Sheriff's Department to assist.

Christine Holman, 21 Myrtle Avenue, North Plainfield, stressed her concerns with speeding on Myrtle Avenue, recalling a motor vehicle accident that totaled her neighbor's car.

Kevin Polly, 45 Willow Avenue, North Plainfield, advised of an accident that occurred in front of his home due to speeding. Sharing his frustrations with the amount of debris left from it, the speaker added that the Borough cited him for failure to remove same.

Francine Gargano, North Plainfield, detailed numerous incidents of vehicles driving on the wrong side of the road and vehicles illegally parked on curbs and sidewalks. Commercial vehicles are illegally parked over-night on the street. Buses have run red lights and made cars move as they cannot maintain their lane when turning. She urged for Chief Parenti to let them

know what they can do as citizens to help with these issues, offering to write letters to the State Department of Transportation or the Attorney General's Office.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Traffic Issues** – S.G. Chief William Parenti explained that speeding remains a state-wide issue and distracted driving accounts for sixty-one percent of motor vehicle accidents. Cell phone usage is typically to blame as motorists refuse to put down their cell phones while driving. Sadly, there has been less enforcement of moving violations because our Attorney General and Governor do not want police making motor vehicle stops.

Referencing three nearby towns that have speed hump ordinances, Chief Parenti indicated that seventy percent of the street's residents would have to be in favor of them. Sharing his concerns, he explained that they slow emergency vehicles attempting to answer calls as quickly as possible. Speed humps also cause issues with snow plow removal. Responding to Ms. Given, Chief Parenti indicated that the Police Department adopted a zero tolerance stance on parking violations at the Mayor's request.

The Chief then detailed the differences between speed humps which are used as a traffic calming measure and the much smaller speed bumps used in parking lots. Speed cushions would allow fire department trucks to travel freely without the need to slow while responding to calls. Chicanes add a series of alternating curves or lane shifts restricting motorists from traveling in a straight line. Chokers extend the lateral horizontal extension of the sidewalk into the street, resulting in a narrower roadway section. Corner extensions/bulb-outs are horizontal extensions of the sidewalk into the street, resulting in a narrower roadway. Mr. McIntyre spoke in favor of the bulb-out as it would restrict vehicles from parking at an intersection and lessen the amount of roadway for pedestrians to cross. Lateral shifts realign an otherwise straight roadway causing travel lanes to shift in direction. Mini roundabouts are raised islands placed in intersections without traffic signals. Road diets revise the lane use or width resulting in one travel lane per direction with minimum practical width. Raised crosswalks are a long raised speed hump with a flat section in the middle and ramps on the ends. Painting lines on roadways is the most affordable option, although many residents don't like that look.

Ms. Schaefer noted the possibility of lawsuits for vehicle damage from speed humps. The councilwoman indicated her frustrations with the amount of illegal parking in her neighborhood. Chief Parenti advised of a company that would install cameras near intersections to photograph every vehicle that stops there for longer than two minutes. The Borough would see no upfront costs as the company charges forty percent of the accrued ticket revenue. The company would be obligated to fix any damaged or broken poles and/or cameras. Ms. Schaefer spoke of the difficulties with double parking and traffic on Howard Street created by the Bank of America customers, particularly on Saturday mornings. Chief Parenti assured he would have officers there that weekend to investigate.

Mr. McIntyre shared his concerns with the amount of speeding in and around his neighborhood, including Willow Avenue and Myrtle Avenue. Any measures implemented to calm traffic would have to include both streets. Responding to the Councilman, Chief Parenti

explained that Somerset County would be responsible for erecting a traffic signal at Mountain Avenue and Westervelt Avenue. Mr. McIntyre suggested petitioning Somerset County to choke down Greenbrook Road in the area of West End School in an effort to slow traffic. Chief Parenti advised that although extremely dangerous, it is not illegal for parents to cross their children from one side of Greenbrook Road to the other if crossing at a ninety degree angle. The issue is laziness, as parents refuse to walk to the cross walk.

Referencing the rampant over-crowding in the Borough, specifically the historic district, Councilman McIntyre explained that vehicles park on the tree lawn where there is no curb. Ms. Corzo questioned the possibility of grant funding to offset the costs of any of these measures. Mr. Merrill inquired after the possibility of a presentation from the vendor with the parking cameras. Chief Parenti advised of the need for approval from legal before moving forward. Referencing the Safe Route to School initiative, Councilwoman Miller proposed utilizing a public information campaign to teach students and parents about crosswalk safety. Council President Stabile proposed the formation of a subcommittee to further study these issues, selecting Council members Given, McIntyre and Schaefer.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

REPORTS OF BOARDS, COMMITTEES & COMMISSIONS:

Ms. Given reported that the recent Board of Education meeting included budget discussions which will move forward upon confirmation of State funding. With the drastic increase in student enrollment, staff will need to be increased.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Schaefer, seconded by Ms. Given and on voice vote carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 10:03 p.m.

Borough Clerk

Council President